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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8978
INFO RUEHAE/AMEMBASSY ASMARA 2035
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 8830
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 3286
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 3020
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4087
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2954
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 6310
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 7143
RUEHC/DEPT OF INTERIOR WASHDC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC
RHMFIUU/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/CCJ5/CCJS//
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS ADDIS ABABA 003644

SIPDIS

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A/S PRM SAUERBREY, AND PRM/AFR
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NSC FOR PMARCHAN

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SUBJECT: STATUS OF USG HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TEAM IN ETHIOPIA

SUMMARY

¶1. Summary: On December 19, staff from USAID and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) arrived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as part of a six-person U.S. Government (USG) Humanitarian Assistance Team (HAT). The team will assess and report on humanitarian conditions in Somali Region to determine the extent and severity of the current food security crisis and reports of deteriorating health and nutrition indicators in the region. In FY 2007 and to date in FY 2008, USAID has provided nearly USD 39.5 million in emergency assistance to affected populations in Somali Region. In conjunction with USAID/Ethiopia, the USG HAT will conduct field assessments to inform emergency response efforts and monitor existing programs. End summary.

HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS IN SOMALI REGION

¶2. In Somali Region of Ethiopia, ongoing military operations by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), as well as insurgent operations by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), have caused delays in food assistance and restricted the movement of people, livestock, and commercial goods. These problems have exacerbated the impact of successive years of drought conditions and

resulted in a food security crisis and increased malnutrition rates. More than 1.6 million people are confronting survival and livelihood protection deficits in Somali Region, including more than 730,000 people in immediate need of food assistance, according to the December Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (GFDRE) Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA) Deyr/Karan Needs Assessment. However, as a result of access constraints, limited reliable information is available on the magnitude and severity of the crisis.

USAID ASSISTANCE IN SOMALI REGION

¶3. On August 16, 2007, U.S. Ambassador Donald Y. Yamamoto declared a disaster due to the complex emergency in Ethiopia's Somali Region.

In response, USAID has provided affected populations in Somali Region with nearly USD 39.5 million in emergency assistance, including 58,150 metric tons of P.L. 480 Title II emergency food assistance in FY 2007 and to date in FY 2008. At present, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is supporting programs in nutrition, health, agriculture, food security, logistics, and humanitarian coordination. In addition, USAID/OFDA maintains two permanent field monitors in Addis Ababa, supports frequent field visits by a regional advisor, and has deployed various staff to Ethiopia, including a program officer who will remain in country through July 2008.

USG HAT

¶4. On December 19, USG HAT members arrived in Addis Ababa. The team includes a team leader, a CDC health and nutrition specialist, information officer, safety and security officer, and program officer. In addition, a food officer from USAID's Office of Food for Peace will join the team on December 27. The USG HAT will work closely with USAID/Ethiopia to assess current humanitarian conditions in Ethiopia's Somali Region and inform emergency response efforts.

¶5. Since arriving in Ethiopia, USG HAT staff have met with representatives from the GFDRE, U.N. agencies, international non-governmental organizations, and various USAID and U.S. Embassy staff monitoring the crisis, including the GFDRE DPPA General Director. In the coming weeks, the USG HAT plans to conduct multiple field assessments to Somali Region in an effort to verify the extent and magnitude of the current crisis, monitor ongoing relief programs, and recommend appropriate response efforts. On December 27, the USG HAT program officer, health and nutrition specialist, and security officer are scheduled to travel to Jijiga and Degehabur zones in Somali Region to conduct a preliminary three-day assessment.

YAMAMOTO